First Congregational Church of Westfield
The Newsletter—November 2026



***ALONG THE WAY* with Rev. Kristie Rubendunst – November 2026**

As autumn deepens, our calendars fill with familiar traditions that bring us together year after year -- There are harvest fairs, Halloween celebrations with children and grandchildren in costume, and the sugar highs that leave us running ragged after too much candy. There are Thanksgiving dinners with tables heaped high with roasted meats and seasonal delights. And there are beautiful church services with wreath-covered columns and carol singing.

We cherish these gatherings. But by themselves, they do not build relationships.

Relationships grow in the time we spend together. They grow around kitchen counters, as we peel potatoes and chop onions. They grow when we work shoulder to shoulder, repairing the church building or raking autumn leaves. They grow when we sit together in prayer and grief-support groups, sharing the joys and sorrows of our lives.

It is not the activity itself that creates the relationship. It is the conversation, the shared experience, and the care we show one another along the way.

What if we invited our neighbors not simply to attend our celebrations, but to help create them? Or made room for simpler gatherings—a cup of coffee at the diner, pizza and a movie, or an evening sharing stories about what gives our lives meaning? Building relationships need not require elaborate programs or exhausting preparations. Sometimes it begins with two people sharing a conversation, and grows when one brings a friend.

We have *in-reach* to do, engaging every member of our congregation. And we have *outreach* to do, stepping beyond our familiar circles to meet our neighbors where they are.

We must be willing not only to welcome people to our tables, but also to sit at theirs. We can share their stories, learn their children's names, and remember those they have loved and lost.

For we cannot truly love neighbors we have never taken the time to know. *Who might we discover waiting for us just beyond our doors?*

In Faith,

Rev. Kristie

Family Ministries

The Disc Golf event got postponed to October 11 and thirteen people attended. Marc Winer commented that it was a great turnout and a lot of fun.

All who stayed for the Lunch and Game event enjoyed the wraps from Hamel's Catering. They were excellent and a big thank you to Hamel's Catering and to all of the helpers and bakers that set up, served and cleaned up. A few people did have some fun playing a game.

The Family Ministries Committee will give out candy at the downtown business trick or treat event on October 30th from 4 – 5 PM. Be on the lookout for Barry Bones and Betty as you go around the green that day. A Halloween backdrop will be set up for anyone that wants to take their picture with our skeleton friends. Anyone can join us to give out candy.

Looking forward to November there will be a church outing to see the Thunderbirds.

The Family Ministries Committee will also have a Contemporary Service on Sunday November 8 at 4 PM. Watch your bulletin and weekly updates for more information.

Gail Ives



"The only proof he needed of the existence of God was music"

Kurt Vonnegut

In reflection for writing this piece, I am realizing that my spiritual relationship with God has most often been through music. There have been deeply spiritual moments throughout my life that have occurred in big and small ways and in expected and unexpected places and times. It is the peace, the loving connections, the transcendence and the emotional power of music that is my proof that God is there and is speaking to me.

I suppose my first spiritual musical encounter was in the fourth grade when the music teacher had my class sing in two part harmony for the very first time. Just a simple little round, but for me, it was that proverbial "heavenly light and angels singing" moment. It gave me a feeling that was bigger than I could describe as a nine year old. Looking back, I think it was God speaking to my young emotional self. "You will have a powerful relationship with music." It turns out that I did. I loved school. I loved music. I became a music teacher and in turn, hopefully, helped to create powerful and emotional musical experiences for my own young students.

There have been many other *smaller* spiritual moments. like when I'm alone in the car, driving into my garage but cannot possibly turn the radio off until that piece of music is finished. NEPM calls them "driveway moments" but I think God is speaking to me and saying "take time, be present and let the emotion fill you."

I have felt God in the *expected* places; singing in both large and small choirs and choruses throughout my life. It is in experiencing those particularly emotionally packed anthems and large choral works (think Beethoven's Ninth or the Brahms Requiem) that deeply affect the audience as well as the performers, that is my proof that God is speaking to me. "You are where you are meant to be and you are feeling a power bigger than yourself."

The *unexpected* musical places surprise me but nevertheless provide me with more proof of this spiritual correlation with God. In Boston Symphony Hall in 2008 when my, then high school age son, sang in the All-State Chorus was one such place. It was a beautiful concert. A proud parental moment for sure, but what I didn't expect was the emotional and spiritual power of a singular piece of music in the program, Rachmaninoff's Bogoroditse Devo, a Slavonic version of the Hail Mary. God was again speaking to me by solidifying a powerful feeling of connection between music, a mother and a son.

And there were also *big* moments. In 2012 my mother was in the hospital and dying from a massive stroke. The quiet, dark room, the kind nurses and the family members surrounding her were all part of the scene, but it was the simple, lovely solo piano music that was being piped into the hospice room as she passed that sustained me and that I will never forget. That too was God speaking, "She is with me now, be at peace, all is well."

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Deacons Corner **November 2026**

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In closing I would be remiss if I failed to mention the significance of being a member of the First Church Choir and its effect on my spirituality. It was the music that drew me to this church in the first place back in the 1980's and it was the First Congregational Church Choir that brought me back to this church a few years ago when I was looking for a new church home that would fill me up in a musical way. It is in the making of music with this talented group that my spiritual relationship with God is renewed weekly. "I am where I am meant to be."

Janice Longstreeth, Deacon



November Newsletter- World Service Committee

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. John 6:35

Thank You

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen: Thank You to each person who has baked a dessert, assisted with meal preparation, delivered meals, and/or assisted in serving the meal. We could not serve the community without your generosity and assistance.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING OF YOUR TIME AND RESOURCES

Westfield Food Pantry: 3rd Sunday of each month: Each month we bring items for the Westfield Food Pantry. Items that are requested include Spaghetti sauce, Pasta, Soup, Crackers, Macaroni & Cheese, Tuna fish, canned vegetables, Cereal, Canned Fruit, Peanut Butter, Jelly.
The **2nd Sunday** in each month your WSC will make an announcement for the items that are in short supply at the Food Pantry. Thank you for the continued support for Westfield Food Pantry.

Our Community Table/Westfield Soup Kitchen - 4th Tuesday of the month: We will need desserts for the meal. Cupcakes, cookies, brownies, sheet cakes are greatly appreciated by those who share a meal at the Soup Kitchen. Each donation must serve **24** people. If you are willing to bake a dessert, please contact **Nancy Condon**, Goodie Guru at 413-297-0778 or at nancy@paddleforwater.net. Tuesday bring your dessert to the church by 2:00pm or take it to the Soup Kitchen at 101 Meadow Street between 4:00 & 4:30. It would be great if you could stay and help. **CALL Cindy LaPlante 568-2833** to learn how you could help.

Westfield River Elementary School: All is good at school this year, no new requests at this time.

HELO Haiti: World Service Committee member Jennifer Waldorf is the liaison, should you have any questions about HELO Haiti please ask Jennifer. Check the bulletin board for the latest on HELO. Thank you for your continued support for HELO Haiti.

Monthly Highlights: Each month your WSC will highlight one or two of our missions.
This month we are highlighting: National Military Family Association, this organization is a non-profit dedicated to serving service members and their families. They provide spouse scholarships, camps for military kids, and retreats for families reconnecting after deployment and for the families of the wounded, ill, or injured. If you or you know of someone that has been in military, you know how difficult it can be to reconnect to loved ones after deployment. Thank you all for your donations for this great mission project.

Prayers: Prayers are needed in so many areas of the World. Please pray for Peace and God's Spirit to touch the lives of country leaders. Pray that peace will be restored.

World Service Committee, Ray Salois, Nancy Condon, Gail Ives, Dorothy Cichonski, Jennifer Waldorf, Barbara James



Sunshine Baskets
Sunday, November 22rd



What a wonderful way to show members of our church family that may be shut in, ill or just unable to make it to church how much they are thought of. We encourage donations of items, time and money to make these baskets possible.



Please bring gifts to church on
November 22nd



We are in need of the following items:
Fresh Fruit: Apples, Oranges, Pears and Bananas. Grapes
Dried Fruit in Individual Packages:
Apricots, Dates, Figs, Prunes and Raisins
Individual Wrapped items:
Crackers, Muffins, Mini Breads, Cookies, Small gifts,
Mints or Soft Candies, Small Jars of Jelly or Jam.
Monetary gifts are needed to defray the cost of supplies. (ribbon, containers, cards)







November Birthdays

11/02 Lisa Crean
11/03 Robert Bard
11/05 Michael Cichonski
11/06 Seth James
11/07 Greg Hamel
11/08 Ray Zenkert
11/10 Dorothy Cichonski
11/11 Phil Zych
11/12 Mayme Lajoie
11/12 Richard Grimaldi
11/12 Marie Marx
11/17 Sherry Balzano
11/17 Sarah Bray
11/20 Dina Slayton
11/20 Joseph Gonzalez
11/21 Darlene Klaubert
11/25 Jacey Gonzalez
11/28 Jack Tozzi
11/29 Tom Samwell



Hearing Devices are available for your use during the worship service. If you miss any words of our service we suggest you give it a try. Just ask an usher for one. We are sure it will make the service much more enjoyable.

LOVE & REMEMBRANCE LUMINARIA



HELP US LIGHT A PATHWAY TO OUR DOORS WITH LUMINARIA

As we approach the Christmas Season

HONOR OR REMEMBER A LOVED ONE WITH A LUMINARIA

$5.00 EACH

Your name and your loved one's name will appear on the Luminaria

Luminaria will be on display at the Christmas Concert, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

___ Quantity @ $5.00 each = $_____

In Memory/Honor of:

_____

Given By:

_____

Total Donation: $_____

Please make checks payable to:

First Congregational Church

Please return to the Church Office

Worship Services at First Congregational Church of Westfield
9:30AM

November 1st
Coming Alive: The Way of Love
Communion and Remembrance Sunday Remembrance Sunday

November 8th
Coming Alive: Abundance and Generosity

November 15th
Coming Alive: What Stirs Within Us?

November 22nd Thanksgiving Sunday
Celebrating Abundance: Becoming Whole and Alive
Sunshine Baskets * Joint Service in Westfield

November 29th First Sunday of Advent: Hope

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